

	MEDIA RELATIONS	Operations Order 6.8.00
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1. **GENERAL INFORMATION**

- A. The objective of this policy is to give employees specific rules and guidance pertaining to media appearances in order to provide the public with quality information concerning public safety issues and the affairs of the Department, while protecting the rights of crime victims and those who stand accused.
- B. All members of the Department should be courteous and professional when dealing with members of the media about the affairs of the Department and access to crime scenes.

2. **MEDIA INQUIRIES**

- A. As soon as possible after inquiry, the media will be informed by designated employees only of the occurrence of crimes or other matters that are of public concern.

(1) Designated employees include:

- All Department lieutenants and higher
 - Authorized employees of the Public Affairs Bureau (PAB)
 - Any employee who has obtained prior permission from his/her chain of command (commander/administrator level) and at the direction of a public information officer (PIO)
- * Specific guidelines pertaining to the appearance of employees in the media may be established by the employees' chain of command.

NOTE: See section 2.C of this order for incidents which will only be handled by a PIO.

- (2) Under no circumstances will information be released without first obtaining permission from the detail responsible for the investigation.

NOTE: Release of Incident Reports (IRs), memorandums, and audio and video recordings to the media also requires permission from the detail responsible for the investigation and in accordance with [Operations Order 5.5.00, Release of Records](#).

- (a) The information disseminated will be available for release and provided to all media on a fair and equal basis.
 - (b) The information released will not jeopardize the rights of crime victims or persons accused of crimes and will not compromise the security of any investigation or breach any confidential relationship.
 - (c) Civilian personnel will refer all requests for information regarding a criminal investigation to the supervisor in charge of the investigation, the on-duty patrol lieutenant, or, if present, the PIO.
- B. The Media Relations Unit has specific responsibilities for the dissemination of information and is available on a 24-hour basis through a Communications supervisor to assist any commander or on-scene supervisor in responding to media inquiries.

(1) **Media Relations Unit members will:**

- Assist in preparing information for release, whether or not media representatives are present.
- Arrange news conferences/briefings with the Police Chief or designee when it is necessary to disseminate information concerning police or criminal activities that are of broad public interest.
- Prepare and distribute media advisories.

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2. B. (2) Media Advisories

- (a) Media advisories are developed and distributed on an as-needed basis.
- (b) Media advisories relating to a matter of public interest will be distributed as determined by the Media Relations Unit.

C. To respond to media interests in a timely manner, any supervisor at the scene of the following types of incidents will contact a PIO via a Communications supervisor as soon as practical:

- Officers involved in heroic or lifesaving actions
- All police shootings
- All serious injury traffic collisions involving Department personnel
- Fatal traffic collisions involving children less than 12 years of age
- All multiple homicides or multiple traffic fatalities
- Major civil disturbances, riots, etc.
- Confirmed sniper or barricade incidents with hostages
- Aircraft accidents or an Alert 3, other than at the airport
- Bomb related incidents where a device has been found and/or detonated
- Arrests involving prominent persons
- Any incident where the assistance of a PIO is deemed necessary or desirable by the on-scene supervisor

D. Release of Information by On-Scene Patrol Personnel

- (1) With the exception of the incidents listed above in section 2.C of this order, patrol lieutenants are authorized to handle on-scene media requests that are under their scene responsibility.
 - Patrol lieutenants have the authority to delegate this responsibility if needed.
- (2) Any time an investigative detail is called out to a scene and a briefing is conducted, on-scene personnel releasing information to the media should attend the briefing prior to the dissemination of any information.
- (3) When information is to be released to the media and/or interviews are to be conducted, the following procedures should be followed:
 - (a) The on-scene patrol lieutenant or designee will notify awaiting media personnel he/she will be handling the interviews and a PIO will not be responding.
 - (b) Once his/her scene responsibilities are completed, the on-scene patrol lieutenant or designee will conduct interviews with the media.
 - This includes phone interviews if applicable.
 - (c) Once the interviews are completed, the on-scene patrol lieutenant or designee will ensure the information released to the media is entered in a station entry and emailed to PhoenixPD.PIO@phoenix.gov.
- (4) The on-scene patrol lieutenant or designee will check with the desk aide at his/her assigned precinct for messages relative to the scene left by other media.
 - All messages will be returned in a timely manner once his/her scene responsibilities are completed.
- (5) **At no time should patrol personnel release information that is controversial in nature or related to liability concerns for the Department.**

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2. D. (6) If the on-scene patrol lieutenant or designee becomes too busy to conduct interviews, the on-call PIO should be contacted via a Communications supervisor.
 - The PIO is required to respond to all scenes within one (1) hour.
- E. Contact Between Employees and the Media
 - If an employee is confronted with questions or probes of a controversial nature, the employee will refer the matter to a supervisor or PIO.
- F. Overnight/Weekend Access
 - (1) If the incident is being investigated by patrol, the request should be directed to the on-duty precinct lieutenant.
 - (a) The media should be directed to call the respective precinct desk aide and leave a message for the on-duty lieutenant.
 - (b) The desk aide will send a mobile data computer (MDC) message to the lieutenant or ensure the message is delivered efficiently.
 - (2) If the on-duty precinct lieutenant is not available or the incident is not being investigated by patrol, the media should be directed to send questions/inquiries to the PIO email at PhoenixPD.PIO@phoenix.gov.
- G. Information on Specific Cases/Topics/Procedures

(1) Photographs	Only the Media Relations Unit may release photographs of suspects to the media following the below guidelines: • The aid of the public is sought in identifying or apprehending a suspect • The suspect has been booked • Photographs may be taken of a suspect exposed in transit, but an officer will not pose the suspect. • If a person is not wanted and is under no suspicion of criminal activity, a photograph will not be released. • Photographs of suspects will not be released if in-person or photographic lineups have yet to be conducted by investigators.
(2) Death Investigation	• Information released to the media on the cause of death in cases under investigation by the Department will only be taken from the medical examiner's written report. • Employees will not attempt to interpret findings and will refer such requests to the medical examiner. • If a medical examiner's report is unavailable, requests for cause of death information will be referred to the Maricopa County Office of the Medical Examiner (OME). • The identity of persons who have died will not be released to the media until the next of kin has been notified.
(3) Property Loss Amounts	• Information regarding the amount of money or other items of value taken during any crime may be released to the media except when the release of the information would result in a probability of substantial material harm to the best interests of the State or interests of privacy and confidentiality. • The decision to release information will rest with the supervisor in charge of the investigation.

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2. G. Information on Specific Cases/Topics/Procedures: (Continued)

(4) Primary Investigating Agency	• When the Department is <u>not</u> the primary investigating agency, information or comments concerning investigations conducted by other agencies will not be released. • Inquiries will be referred to the investigating agency. • Information regarding multiple crimes committed in multiple jurisdictions will be released through the Media Relations Unit. • Information concerning the operation of the Department that does not fall within the guidelines provided in this order will not be released without the prior approval of the employee's lieutenant.
(5) Statistical Information	• Statistical information of a general nature, such as crime rate information in a precinct during a particular period, may be released to the media or other interested parties by the Police Chief or designee, as provided by the Crime Analysis and Research Unit (CARU).

3. **ACCESS TO CRIME SCENES/FACILITIES**

A. Media representatives should not be excluded from the vicinity of a crime or accident scene.

- (1) Media representatives will be treated with the same rules of access to scenes as members of the general public.
 - Photographers and reporters cannot be denied access if the general public is allowed to pass.
 - * If the area is not restricted by crime scene tape, media representatives will be allowed access.
- (2) Entrance to any specific area wherein evidence could be destroyed or compromised will be temporarily denied.
 - (a) The supervisor in charge of the investigation will control entry by media representatives into the area.
 - (b) The Department does not issue credentials to media representatives.
 - (c) Officers will advise the media of any potentially hazardous situations at the scene of a traffic collision or other crime.
- (3) The media should be referred to the PIO or on-duty patrol lieutenant.

B. Media photographers should not be restricted from taking pictures at the scene of a crime or a traffic collision while the photographers are on property open to the public.

- (1) Officers may not bring members of the media or other third parties into the home or onto private property during the execution of warrants or other legitimate law enforcement functions when the presence of the media or third parties is not in aid of the execution of the warrant or law enforcement function (Fourth Amendment violation).
- (2) If media representatives (including photographers) are on private property and the owner or custodian of the property desires the media leave the premises, officers will ask the media to move onto public property.
- (3) If media presence (including photographers) at the scene of a police incident appears to endanger others or inflame a situation, media representatives will be asked to move to a neutral location.

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4. **SUSPECT'S CONTACT WITH MEDIA**

- A. While in the custody of the Department, suspects will not be granted access to the media.
- B. If suspects request contact with the media, the request will be referred to the holding facility (Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) jail, Department of Corrections, etc.).

5. **APPEARANCES BY EMPLOYEES IN THE MEDIA (ELECTRONIC/WRITTEN)**

- A. All requests from the media to have Department personnel participate in films, advertisements, feature stories, or public appearances require prior approval from the Police Chief.
 - This policy does not apply to employees being interviewed by the media at crime scenes, spontaneous media interviews, or miscellaneous Department interviews previously approved by PAB).
- (1) All requests for such appearances will be detailed in a memorandum and forwarded through the chain of command to the Police Chief and, once approved, the PAB commander.
 - The script, geographical or subject areas to be covered, program type, etc., will be evaluated prior to giving permission to the employee.
- (2) The request memorandum will include the following:
 - Content of the interview/story
 - Intent of the interview/story
 - Description of any City equipment to be used in the interview/story
 - Description of the type of medium in which the story will appear (type of radio/TV station, magazine, etc.)
 - If in uniform or not

NOTE: If the request is for printed media, at least three (3) recent copies of the publication will be attached to the request memorandum.

- B. PAB can be contacted to facilitate media relations training for patrol supervisors.
- B. For details on the use of police equipment for motion picture productions, see [Operations Order 4.8.00, Off-Duty Work](#).

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